आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, 1-89-i

RESCUE DEMOCRACY FROM MONEY-POWER

Rajaji is never lacking in initiative and resourcefulness. However baffling the problem may be, he can come forward with suggestions and solution after solution. Possessing a keen intellect, he possesses an equally facile pen.

—RAJENDRA PRASAD

I must say that very few persons there are in India, with whom I should like to discuss any intricate problem or issue, more than with Rajaji. I do not know if, after discussion with him, I would agree with him or not, but I am sure that a discussion with him would do me good and probably I would agree with him. That is the type of keen mind, the mind of a person of the highest integrity and self-sacrifice. That, I say, is an invaluable asset to a nation.

—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Rajaji is an acknowledged leader of our country. He is a great administrator, a great patriot and a wise statesman. It is our good fortune to have in a period of crisis the guidance of one on whom we can rely for advice and counsel.

—VALLABHBHAI PATEL

...Rajaji, keeper of my conscience, is no less a votary of truth and non-violence than

—M. K. GANDHI

RESCUE DEMOCRACY FROM MONEY-POWER

BY

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

FOREWORD

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

INTRODUCTION

M. C. CHAGLA

General Editors

R. R. DIWAKAR

S. RAMAKRISHNAN

1977

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

KULAPATI K. M. MUNSHI MARG

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Preface

Our country has just come out of a traumatic experience. The year of grace 1947 had ushered in Independence through a historically unique way of a bloodless non-violent revolution; 1977 regained for us, again by a bloodless ballot-box revolution, the freedom lost during the last years of the last decade.

Now that we have a truly people's Government, unflinching in its commitment to full civil liberties and human freedom, every thinking Indian should contribute towards strengthening the foundations of our democratic system in such a way that no individual or party can ever again dare to tamper with the sacred God-given rights of our people.

Looking back, one is astonished how Rajaji had foreseen the real pitfalls of our democracy. He could clearly see how, among other things, money-power—and the corruption which it brings in its wake—hit at the very roots of free and fair elections, which are the foundations of the democratic system. He was a crusader for rescuing our democracy from the bondage to money-power and its evil effects. Through his writings, Rajaji had, in the fifties and sixties, given many original and bold suggestions in this behalf. They are perhaps more relevant today than when he wrote them.

An embodiment of simple living and high thinking, and utterly unselfish, Rajaji was endowed with prophetic insight and unique capacity to look far ahead of his times—as the readers would see in this collection of his articles.

Rajaji was a far-seeing, sagacious statesman. A moral giant, he was the "conscience-keeper" of Mahatma Gandhi.

Of the 20 articles contained in this book, 19 appeared in the weekly *Swarajya*. The article "Parliamentary Democracy in India—Basic Adaptations" appeared in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. We are grateful to Bhavan's steadfast

friend Shri T. Sadasivam and to Messrs Bennett Coleman & Co. Ltd., proprietors of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, for permitting us to reproduce them.

The book has been arranged in two Parts: Part I "Rescue Democracy from Money-Power" comprises articles on the baneful influence of money-power on elections and Part II "Towards Genuine Democracy" those on the drawbacks in our democracy and remedial measures therefor.

We are also thankful to Shri K. Vedamurthy who, with meticulous care, selected them.

We are indeed beholden to Lokanayak Jayaprakash Narayan, the "moral conscience of post-Gandhian India," who brought us deliverance from the dictatorial rule imposed by our own elected representatives, for contributing a thought-provoking Foreword to this book. Words are too inadequate to give full expression to our sense of gratitude to him for doing so, despite his none too good a health and preoccupations with matters of supreme national importance.

We are also grateful to Shri M. C. Chagla, the eminent jurist and statesman, for his illuminating Introduction. Shri Chagla's own contribution to what may well be called our second freedom struggle, is well-known. His indomitable courage to fight for civil liberties and his indefatigable campaigning, in an advanced age, against the tyranny of dictatorship are really commendable.

Bombay:
June 26, 1977

R. R. Diwakar
S. Ramakrishnan
General Editors

Foreword

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Ranking next only to Gandhiji in political wisdom and maturity, Rajaji is rightly regarded as the Nestor of modern Indian politics. He is one of those few great politicians of whom it could be said that though deeply involved in politics, his gaze was much above the battle lines. He had a deep insight into human nature and an astonishing capacity for dispassionate and objective analysis of all national issues.

Rajaji played a very important role in shaping India's destiny, both in the pre-Independence era and in the post-Independence era. Though he had a lesser role to play in "Congress politics" in the post-Independence era, in my view, he came to play during this period a greater role in "National politics." A man of very strong convictions and willing to make any sacrifice to *live* by them, Rajaji, instead of devoting the evening of his busy and achievement-packed life in rest and relaxation, doggedly fought for the re-enthronement of moral values in politics and public life and emerged as the "democratic conscience" of post-Independent India.

In his later years, he was perhaps the bitterest critic of the Indian National Congress, of which he was one of the foremost leaders for nearly half a century. He did not even spare Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at a time when very few dared to publicly say a word against him. It was not out of "frustration" or to protect "vested interests" or for gaining any personal ends that Rajaji, in his late seventies, raised his "voice of dissent." As he averred, he did so to save Prime Minister Nehru from "adulation day in and day out" and with a view to bringing about the much-needed correctives in the political life of the country.

In fact, the credit for creating a distinct Opposition personality in the country's politics should largely go to Rajaji. Of course, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia have also contributed their mite.

With over 70 years of active and selfless public life to his credit and endowed with a razor-sharp intellect, Rajaji's perception of human psychology was unrivalled. Having been closely associated with the administration of the country from the time Provincial Autonomy was introduced in 1937 —as Prime Minister of Madras, Central Minister, Governor, Governor-General and again Chief Minister of Madras—he had first-hand knowledge of the inner design and working of the official mechanism at all levels in the Centre and the States.

Rajaji was convinced that in a democracy based on universal suffrage, a Government by the majority without an effective Opposition "is like driving a donkey on whose back you put the whole load in *one* bundle. The two-party system steadies movement by putting a fairly equal load into each pannier. In the human body, two eyes and two ears enable a person to place the objects seen and heard. A single-party democracy soon loses its sense of proportion. It sees, but cannot place things in perspective or apprehend all sides of a question"*

One who weighed every word he uttered or wrote, Rajaji was a relentless campaigner for rescuing our democracy from the corrosive influence of money-power and its evil brood. As I went through his collected writings on the subject, I could not help admiring his far-sightedness, absolute sincerity, depth and courage of conviction and total devotion to national welfare.

No truth gains currency when it is first propounded and no prophet has been spared of initial calumny and disparagement. Similar was the fate of Rajaji when he set his face

* *I Meet Rajaji,* Monica Felton, former British M P. (Labour), Macmillan, London.

sternly against the conventional politics of election-winning and pursuit of pelf and power. At the time when Rajaji wrote these articles, they did not evoke the response they deserved. This was perhaps due to the then prevalent all-pervasive charisma of Pandit Nehru and the blinding force of unshared power and the all-round subservience and sycophancy it generates.

But today, both Jawaharlalji and Rajaji have left the scene. The nation itself has just regained its freedom from despotic rule, about the advent of which Rajaji had clear forebodings and of which he had given ample, timely and unambiguous warnings. Against this setting, today his writings acquire a new dimension and significance and call for fresh in-depth study.

His words are words of wisdom. If the plant of parliamentary democracy is not merely to survive but thrive on our soil, it is imperative to create a corruption-free and congenial climate for it till the tap roots go deep into the soil.

My own faith in "Total Revolution" is well-known. This cannot come about unless people become the direct masters and acquire the power to guide and guard the guardians. And how can people become the direct masters unless democracy is rid of the evil of money-power and other related ills?

Today, can a common man, howsoever popular and deserving, think of contesting elections? Elections are such an expensive affair that even a moderately well-to-do man will shy away.

Rajaji was right when he said that "if we desire freedom to replace authoritarian dictatorship in the field of political ambitions, if we desire to release merit from the entanglement of party funds, we should examine how we can make elections much less expensive than they are now."

Socrates-like, Rajaji did point out that "the man or woman who gets to top power in New Delhi without being too scrupulous about how to retain power, *has a vested interest in making elections too expensive.*"

Naturally, Rajaji became a gadfly to the Congress rulers who came to look upon this ardent patriot as a thorn in their side and branded him as a "reactionary" and spokesman of the rich, though in truth it was the Congress that was enjoying the patronage of the rich.

In the words of Rajaji, every company donation to the ruling party in a "regimented" economy would be nothing but an "extortion."

He also pointed out that company donations to political parties would not only be "political immorality" but also "misappropriation of shareholders' money for purposes not contemplated by the objects of the company."

Rajaji was of the avowed opinion that "there should be six months' interregnum for party government, and a non-party administration should carry on during election period, under the President and the Governors in their respective jurisdictions."

What are the measures that have been suggested by Rajaji to rid the evils bedevilling our democracy? Why not "nationalise" the elections? he asked. Why not mobile booths? he queried. Why not a system like the census operations replace the present pattern of elections? he wondered. Why not functional and proportional representation? he argued. Why not the ruling party do everything to help a sound and strong Opposition to grow up? he implored. Some of his suggestions are indeed original and revolutionary.

Rajaji knew only too well that in this world there is nothing that is perfect. Yet he had all along stressed that

this should not deter the sincere and selfless servants of the people to dare and experiment.

II

The replacement of the Indira Gandhi Government was not the be-all and end-all of the "Total Revolution" of my conception. For steady progress towards the goal, we must have an incorruptible, efficient and good Government, the *sine qua non* for which is free and fair and the least expensive elections.

I therefore commend for earnest discussion the various measures suggested by revered Rajaji.

My esteemed friend, jurist and statesman Shri M. C. Chagla in his Introduction has also made some valuable suggestions, which include, among others, "the institution of the Committee System as it prevails in the U.S.," the establishment of a convention that "the Government should not treat *every* question that comes before the House as a matter of confidence and compel its members to vote for its proposal by issuing a whip," so that "both the members of the majority party and the Opposition will feel that they can influence the decision by their speeches and by their votes."

In addition, may I take the opportunity of doing some loud thinking on the subject? I certainly claim no originality for the following suggestions nor am I oblivious of the many practical difficulties which will have to be surmounted in effectively implementing them.

First: Why not the entire election expenditure be met by the Government itself?

Today, the number of Members of Parliament is 542 and of State Legislatures around 4,200.

I believe that the pace of the process of political polarisation will now be faster and it will become an accomplished fact in the not-too-distant future.

With eventual polarisation, let us assume that the number of candidates for each seat, on an average, as in the United Kingdom and the United States, will not exceed three. Then there would be 1,616 persons standing for Parliament and 12,600 for State Assemblies.

The permissible ceiling for election expenses per candidate being Rs. 35,000 for Parliament and Rs. 15,000 for the State Assembly, the total expenses of all candidates work out to less than Rs. 25 crores—the incidence per year being only Rs. 5 crores. In 1974-75, the Government of India's annual expenditure was about Rs. 16,000 crores and that of State Governments around Rs. 6,000 crores.

The entire election expenditure would constitute but a small percentage of the total annual expenditure of the Centre and the States, working out to less than one-tenth of one per cent!

Second: Instead of depending on company donations—a sure means of obligation and insidious corruption—why not all political parties fight the elections on their own steam by entirely depending on the income from their membership fees?

Any national party that aspires to form Governments at the Centre and the States in a vast country like ours with 620 million people, should have a primary membership running into several lakhs. As General Elections are held only once in five years, it should not be difficult to raise money enough to meet the electioneering expenses through the annual membership fee—the healthiest and soundest of all means of fund-raising. This will also go a long way in eliminating the corrupting influence of tainted money in elections.

The dependence on membership fee for electioneering expenditure would automatically help eliminate bogus membership—the bane of many political parties in our country. This will also pave the way for cleaner intra-party democracy.

Third: Maybe due to economic compulsions, the system of permits, licenses and quotas cannot be altogether done away with. True, we cannot wish away the propensity for greed and unscrupulousness of a section of the business community and the possible lack of absolute integrity and probity in some sections at the ministerial and administrative levels. But, in order to prevent the abuse of the system for personal or party gains, would it not be better to entrust licensing etc. to an Autonomous Board consisting of the representatives of the Ruling Party, Opposition, trade, industry and workers?

III

The various suggestions made by Rajaji, Shri M. C. Chagla and myself herein as also those contained in the Report of the Committee on Electoral Reforms,* I believe, can form the basis for a meaningful national debate on this vital issue.

I hope that the new governments in the Centre and the States and the newly-elected Members of Parliament and Legislatures will take early steps to convene a National Colloquium of representatives of the leading political parties, religious, social, educational and cultural institutions, academicians, scientists, intellectuals, constructive workers, trade unionists and others to evolve a workable and fool-proof scheme of electoral reforms.

Not only millions of our countrymen but the world outside have high expectations from the successful functioning of Indian democracy.

Sir Anthony Eden, a former British Prime Minister, observed in 1954 after his second visit to India:† "Of all

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* Appointed in 1974 by Jayaprakash Narayan on behalf of the Citizens For Democracy. Report published in 1975. Members: E.P.W. Da Costa, M. R. Masani, V. M. Tarkunde, P. G Mavalankar, A. G Noorani and K. D. Desai.

† *Full Circle*, Cassell, London.

the experiments in government *which have been attempted since the beginning of Time,* I believe that the Indian venture into parliamentary government is the most exciting. A vast sub-continent is attempting to apply to its tens and hundreds of millions a system of free democracy which has been slowly evolved over the centuries in this small island, Great Britain. It is a brave thing to try to do so. The Indian venture is not a pale imitation of our practice at home, but a magnified and multiplied reproduction on a scale we have never dreamt of. If it succeeds, its influence on Asia is incalculable for good. Whatever the outcome, we must honour those who attempt it."

India is the largest democracy in the world. We form one-fifth of the human family.

In this fear-and-avarice-ridden world, we must therefore hasten the dawn of a new age when democracy and the rule of law will shine by their own intrinsic merit and come to be universally accepted as the best form of government any civilised and cultured people can give unto themselves.

Through the ages, India has been a pathfinder—*margadarshi.* We have a genius for constructive synthesis which is the keynote of our unbroken, ageless culture dating back to 5,000 years or more.

We are again on the threshold of a new epoch.

Let us not fail ourselves and betray the trust of our teeming millions. Let us not belie the hopes and aspirations of humanity at large.

Freedom, democracy and culture are inter-related and inter-dependent. It is, therefore, appropriate that the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, dedicated to life, literature and culture, is bringing out this book at such a crucial transitional period in our history.

Introduction

M. C. CHAGLA

Rajaji had a towering intelligence and a towering ability, but he combined with these great qualities, humility and a feeling that no one is indispensable in a democracy and an abiding sense of fallibility. He was a great patriot. His opinions and actions were solely motivated by what he considered to be in the interests of the country. He was fearless in his utterances, and did not care if they were unconventional or opposed to orthodox opinion.

In 1962, Rajaji undertook his first and only trip abroad as the leader of a three-man delegation sponsored by the Gandhi Peace Foundation, at the instance of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to plead with President Kennedy and other leading world statesmen for the stoppage of nuclear tests. On his way to Washington, Rajaji halted in London and stayed with me. I was then High Commissioner for India in the United Kingdom. At that time, I came to know him intimately and was carried away by his simplicity, charm, humour and humane qualities.

Democracy is an attitude of mind and an outlook on life. It believes, as articles of faith, in civil liberties, a free press and independence of the judiciary. Without these, democracy cannot function and even though we may have elections and formation of governments by the majority party it will only be a facade behind which dictatorship and authoritarian rule will flourish.

Free and fair elections are very important because through them the people express their views. As the last elections showed, people are capable of overthrowing a most powerful and brutal dictatorship India has ever known. But in order that the elections should be fair and free, much more is necessary than mere sanctity of the ballot and non-interference by government agencies in the conduct of elections.

Rajaji has pointed out the role that money-power plays in elections—collection of crores from the corporations against the law of the land, to be used for indulging in wholesale bribery and making it impossible for the honest but poor man to win the suffrage of his people. He has made a revolutionary suggestion that the elections should be nationalised and the votes should be collected as is done in the case of a national census. Apart from its impracticability, so long as we have parliamentary democracy and parties, it will leave a big loop-hole because of too much dependence on the honesty of those who will collect the votes and the impossibility of eradication of corruption. To my mind, a more practicable method is to remove the ban on companies from giving any money to political parties and to fix a limit to the donations which should be approved by the general meeting of the company and giving wide publicity to the party or parties to which the donation has been given. I would also fix a limit to the donation which an individual can make. The donations must all go to the parties and must be duly audited. Any breach of the above rule must be made a penal offence and severely dealt with.

Rajaji has strongly pleaded for a ban on donations by the companies. We have a ban now, but the result has been a greater evil than when there was no ban. If companies cannot pay, individual directors make large donations out of black money or by so manipulating the accounts of the company that it does not appear that the monies have been paid by the company. Further, the companies have resorted to the device of paying large sums for advertisements to souvenirs which have never seen the light of day. Therefore, an open and honest donation by a company or an individual is much better, provided any breach of it is severely dealt with.

Rajaji has also suggested that when a general election is declared the governments in office should resign and a caretaker government should be installed. This may be possible in the States where President's rule can be imposed. But there is no provision in the Constitution for such action as far as elections to Lok Sabha are concerned. I agree that

the government in power can directly or indirectly influence the elections, but the only remedy is to so tighten the electoral law as to make the use of government agency impossible in the conduct of elections. The Janata Party has set a good example in the last State elections when although they were in power at the Centre they refused to avail themselves of any facilities with regard to transport etc. provided by the State government.

Another suggestion of Rajaji with regard to elections is election by proportional representation or by functional representation. I am afraid that 60 per cent of our people being illiterate it would be impossible to work the complicated system of proportional representation. When voters cannot even sign their names and have to use thumb impression, to expect them to show their preferences by marking them on the ballot paper is an impossibility. With regard to functional representation, I agree with Rajaji that trade, industry and labour should have fair representation in the Lok Sabha as it is not always possible to have such representation through the general elections. One method I would suggest would be to increase the number of members that the President can nominate to the Lok Sabha. Each functional interest can elect its own representative and submit the name to the President and, if the President feels that that particular interest has not been properly represented, he should nominate him as a member. But functional representation, in lieu of general elections as we have now, would never be acceptable to the people. It would be something like the 'Direct Democracy' which Pakistan tried to work and wholly failed to make a success.

Another important step which can be taken to ensure the return of proper candidates to Parliament is setting up of 'Peoples' Committees' or 'Vigilance Committees', as has been recently advocated by Shri Jayaprakash Narayan. In England every candidate has to be approved by what is known as the 'Constituency Committee'. Of course, there is a right of appeal to the National Executive Committee, but they rarely interfere with the decisions of the 'Constituency Com-

mittee'. If we had such 'Vigilance' or 'Peoples' Committees', which would be constantly in contact with the people, they would be in the best position to judge who will represent their interests best in Parliament. As far as possible, their choice should be by consensus, but failing that, it can be by majority and the Parliamentary Board at the Centre should rarely interfere and impose their own choice upon the constituency. The result of my suggestion would be that the voters in the constituency would feel that their own man is in Parliament. They can watch his actions and can make representations to him. The member himself would know the best interests of his constituency through this Vigilance Committee which should be able to advise him on what the constituency needs.

There are two other suggestions with regard to elections which I should like to make. Today, the holding of bye-elections is left entirely to the discretion of the Election Commissioner. The result has been that bye-elections have not been held for months together and have only been held when the party in power thinks it advisable to do so. A time-limit of six months should be laid down within which all the bye-elections must be held and if the time is to be extended by the Election Commissioner, he should make a report giving his reasons which should be placed before Parliament.

The second suggestion is that today the Election Commissioner is appointed by the government and after his retirement he can be appointed to another government office. This is entirely wrong. I have nothing to say against our Election Commissioners who have discharged their duties admirably. One must not only be just, but must also seem to be just. And if the Election Commissioner has to look to the government for preferment after his retirement as Election Commissioner, suspicions are bound to arise that some of his decisions were not fair. Therefore, as in the case of the Auditor-General, it should be provided in the Constitution that once a person is appointed as Election Commissioner, he should be debarred from holding any office of profit in the government.

Rajaji has given considerable thought to the working of parliamentary democracy and he has pleaded for a viable Opposition. He did not live to see the day when the small and fragmented Opposition to the Congress combined and offered a viable alternative. Today the boot is on the other leg. The problem we have now to face is that the Janata Party in many legislatures will have little or no viable Opposition, and this is the problem we have to tackle.

My suggestion in this regard is two-fold: one is the institution of the Committee System as it prevails in the U.S. We have Consultative Committees, of which I have had considerable experience as a Cabinet Minister and they serve very little useful purpose. What we need are Committees with the power and dignity of the various Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives in the U.S.A. These Committees should have the power to examine witnesses, including ministers, and carefully supervise the work of the administration by the government. This will serve another purpose also. The fate of the back-bencher is terrible. Only the other day, a member of the Janata Party who does not hold any ministerial post, told me that it was waste of time to attend Parliament, because there is very little he could do. Now, if the back-benchers are recruited to these various Committees, they will be able to serve a useful purpose.

My second suggestion is that the government should not treat every question that comes before the House as a matter of confidence and compel its members to vote for its proposal by issuing a whip. I think most matters should be left to a free debate and to a free vote. The result will be that both the members of the majority party and of the Opposition will feel that they can influence the decision by their speeches and by their votes. In rare cases involving matters of vital importance, the government should consider them as a vote of confidence and issue a 3-line whip directing every member of the party to vote for the particular proposal.

Rajaji has also considered the question of defections. Now, this is a most difficult question. A Defection Bill is

before Parliament, but there does not seem to be any agreement as yet as to the form and shape it should take. A member may defect out of conviction. Strictly, it is not a defection. We can call it 'crossing the floor'. I think Churchill, whose integrity has never been in question, crossed the floor at least twice, if not three times. Now, we cannot penalise a man for changing his opinion or conviction. As Rajaji himself has said, "loyalty to a party should be based on conviction and not coercion." But, unfortunately in our country, defections are not as a result of convictions but out of a desire to get a ministerial post or, even worse, because of bribery or corruption, and the question is how we should deal with people who degrade the honour and dignity of Parliament in this manner. My own suggestion is that if a particular member stands on the ticket of a particular party and that party expels him, then he must either resign or be disqualified to continue as a Member of Parliament. He must seek re-election and get the members of his constituency to support his action. I know the danger inherent in this suggestion when a party expels a member for extraneous or dishonest considerations. Yet the danger is not very great, because the majority party is not likely to lose a member unless there are very strong reasons for doing so. Whichever way one looks at it the problem presents difficulties. But there is no doubt that we must stop dishonest defections and prevent M.Ps and M.L.As from changing their parties out of dishonourable motives.

Rajaji has rightly emphasised the danger of inflation and unemployment. In his direct and forthright manner he has stated that unemployment should be tackled by "real" employment and not by "wasteful bloating of the services." He says that such employment is worse than unemployment. "It would be better to pay higher wages to officials to support unemployed and idle relations and dependents at home than to run offices with idle hands doing less than fair outturn of work but watching the clock all the time."

He has pleaded for reduction in defence expenditure, depending for national security more on the unity of the

country and a contented people than on a large army and heavy armaments. I am glad that in some respects the Janata Government is moving in this direction by making a beginning in austerity and by reducing defence expenditure.

Rajaji has made a suggestion which is worth considering. An efficient and non-partisan administrative machinery should be set up. We have inherited our administrative system from the British and let it be said to its credit, on the whole it was able and efficient. But it was suited to the British times when they were interested mostly in law and order. It requires a radical change when the whole outlook is transformed and the emphasis is now on social justice and an egalitarian society. Corruption also has crept into the administration and has increased by leaps and bounds.

In this connection, Rajaji has rightly emphasised that the Congress government was largely based on the system of licenses, permits and quotas. So long as we have a commercial community whose main object is to make money, such a system is bound to corrupt both the businessman and the administrator who has the discretion to give or withhold licenses, and permits. If we relax controls and, as far as possible, allow free play to competition and market conditions, subject always to national considerations, less is the chance of unfair advantages being obtained by corruption. We have had recent instances of licenses being issued for essential commodities to satisfy the needs of the consumers and these licenses being sold for profit or the goods to be imported under the licenses being sold abroad at a large profit and the necessary imports not being made. Here again, severe and drastic penalties must be imposed on the businessmen who play with the lives of the poor consumers. There is no greater crime than what I may call 'social crime' —crime against society and the interests of the people.

Rajaji has stated that "as against this dark picture I may express the hope that the people of our country has solid virtues and may not allow things to go wrong". He has

rightly said: "Nemesis is waiting. There is a natural law that brings Evil's downfall by its own weight."

Rajaji did not live to see how much darker the picture became during the 20 months of emergency declared two years back on June 26, 1975, nor did he live to see how his faith in the people was justified by the spectacular victory of the Janata Party in the Parliamentary elections.

Finally, Rajaji has pleaded for purity in the national character and has given as his slogan: "Be good and work hard." The slogan is particularly appropriate today when the industrial peace is threatened by strikes and by impending strikes. It is for the Janata Party to improve the employer-employee relations, to give a proper participation to the workers in the industry in which they are working and to give a proper share in the profit of that industry, so that it would be in the interest of the workers to see that the industry does not suffer by stoppages for any reason whatsoever. I have always been a believer in compulsory arbitration, if all attempts at conciliation and consultations fail. There are enough men of honesty and integrity in this country to give a fair Award which should satisfy both the employer and the worker, and both sides must accept the Award and work it according to its terms. No country can really progress without discipline and hard work.

Rajaji has emphasised all these qualities and what he advocated 20 years ago is very much relevant today and deserves to be seriously considered and applied wherever possible, so that our country which has survived the nightmare of dictatorship and restored democracy fully should not falter again.

It is commendable on the part of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to have brought out this timely publication.

Part I

RESCUE DEMOCRACY FROM MONEY-POWER

1

Elections—A Case for Nationalisation

The culture of democracy with adult franchise and direct elections has been adopted wholesale without due regard to the size of our population, our vast areas of space and the state of national enlightenment. Ambitious politicians find themselves at the mercy of parties; and parties are at the mercy of financiers. A party in power has a certain advantage in the matter of collection of party funds, specially if the nation has allowed the government to exercise powers of nationalization and stiff regulation of all trade and industry. Other parties have to shift for themselves. The poor man has no chance to place his political talents at the disposal of the community.

This is a sad corollary of our attachment to Western democracy. But we cannot write back. Whatever changes we might have to make in the interest of progress and welfare must be made in the same direction as we have let ourselves proceed so far. The processes we have adopted for establishing free and representative government have resulted in power to those who possess financial resources, be it individuals or parties. A sense of oppression, the opposite of freedom, has paradoxically seized men as a result of the flaw in the application of the mechanics of democracy. It has demonstrated the truth that what is meat for one country may be poison for another country.

The remedy lies in changing the mechanics. The expensiveness of elections is what stands in the way of what may be called free enterprise in politics. If we desire freedom to replace authoritarian dictatorship in the field of political ambitions, if we desire to release merit from the entanglement of party funds, we should examine how we can make elections much less expensive than they now are.

Why should not a system like the decennial census operations replace the present polling booths as a means of periodically ascertaining men's minds? Why should not the State run the elections instead of parties and candidates? The total expenditure incurred at present on elections, if we take the sums spent by all the candidates and parties, is a monstrous, unproductive waste. Instead, if the Government could run an official non-party scheme of mobile units that go round in each constituency and collect ballot papers at each house as they collect census information once in ten years, the task of bringing voters to the booth—which in one way or another is the cause of all the expenditure now incurred by parties and individual candidates—woud become a national function.

The details of this scheme of nationalizing elections could be filled in easily if we keep the main principle in view. The result would be the elimination of the bondage to finance that now plays such a large part in electioneering, with all its evil consequences. Of course this change in procedure would carry with it the elimination of all the attractive elements of political adventure including short term propaganda and 'education of the voters' through libel and slander. But this instead of being a loss, may be a real gain. Everything has its defects as well as advantages. We must go by the totality of good and evil in any alternative. The only way to get a reasonable and tolerably satisfactory application of democracy to India is to make vote collection an administrative function to be fulfilled on behalf of all parties and all candidates through the officials of the State.

2

Company Donations to Party Funds—1

The report of the Select Committee, and the dissenting notes attached to it, disclose an interesting situation the like of which has so far not been seen in India at any time. All the political parties in the country—all but the Congress Party—have expressed the view very strongly that companies should be prohibited from contributing funds to political parties. The Congress alone stands apart and objects to the ban. The Congress Party insists that it should continue to be supported by money 'donated' by companies whose every action in the course of their business waits on the pleasure, and dreads the displeasure, of the party which now controls government and the bureaucracy. The latter has now got accustomed not only to obey government orders but to co-operate in their party matters too. Not to speak of victimizing orders, even delay with the appearance of time spent in investigation is enough to ruin a business. Under these conditions which prevail in this country at the present moment, it is no wonder that every party that wants free elections wants the prohibition of companies' donations to political party funds.

The ruling party puts forward its claim to collect funds from companies, unabashed by the irresistible inference to be drawn from this attitude—that it depends for success on the large contributions of rich companies and on governmental power, such as is held in a regimented economy. The controls on imports, exports and distribution are enough to squash any business at any time.

The People's Representation Act puts certain ceilings on expenditure by candidates, and has other elaborate provisions, but the Congress Party collects funds from its fat oxen and spends the money—God knows how—so as to nullify

all these ceilings and restrictions, so elaborately laid down at Dr. Ambedkar's instance. Every other party objects to this collection of funds by the ruling party. But in a shameless manner the ruling party has rejected the amendment in the Select Committee. And if payments to the ruling party for election purposes should also be made free of income-tax, as some have suggested, there is nothing more to be done for the perpetuation of one-party rule.

A certain newspaper has distinguished itself by coming out with laboured arguments in support of retaining the right to collect funds from companies. It asks why companies alone should be prohibited and not other bodies such as social service organizations, etc. The answer is so plain that it is surprising how such a question is asked in the editorial of a leading newspaper. The answer is that where there is plenty of money to be extorted by the ruling party, the prohibition is called for, and not in the case of other bodies. Companies dealing with crores are not in the same position as charitable and other public associations. The attempt to complicate a plain issue with such puzzles is futile. The law in America was passed after considerable experience, and the law in India should be far stricter if we want even the semblance of fair elections in this country.

It is not only funds but power and authority which make elections unfair. It is absolutely necessary that the ruling party should retire from the exercise of the powers in a regimented economy for a period before the elections, if we do not want an automatic re-election to power of the same party, time after time. In an economy such as we have, where thousands of crores, raised here and abroad, are handled by industrialists and others under the more or less direct regimentation of the ruling party in every detail, we cannot but expect absolutism and unbroken single party rule, if the suggestion that there should be a break during election time is not accepted.

3

Company Donations to Party Funds—2

It is truly remarkable that the great exposure of the times has not ruffled the complacency of the ruling party or its bosses. Authority has so emboldened them and hardened their sensibility that they rely on the capacity of the people to forget things rather than attempt to explain or defend. All the political parties in the country agreed solemnly to forgo the collection of donations from companies for election purposes but the Congress Party stood in lonely significance against the amendment of the law. They insisted that they must continue to exercise government power to annoy, intimidate, delay and ruin business and on the strength of that sanction collect fat sums from those in charge of the management of the companies' moneys. The money does not belong to those who disburse it, but this does not matter to the Congress Party. The law in America forbids such donations but this precedent too does not matter. The money is to be used to evade the intent and the provisions of the People's Representation Act but this too does not matter to it. The one thing it cares for is to be re-elected time after time, so that all distinction between party and State may disappear in the minds of the people and in the day-to-day administration of the land.

The socialist State policy, and in particular the various restrictions and regulations imposed by the State on individual enterprise and management, and on trade and business of all kinds as a corollary to the implementation of the Plans, confer on the ruling party such enormous powers over the business community that no gifts by members of that community can be considered voluntary. Every donation to the ruling Party is an extortion. During the British period, police associations were prohibited from collecting donations for their social and festive purposes, in order to prevent

exploitation of their position of authority in the community, which was not half as much as what now Congress ministers enjoy and are allowed to enjoy. There is stronger reason now to prohibit collection of funds by the ministers and their associates in the party for political and election expenditure than the British regime had to ban collection of donations from citizens by the police. The ministers and their minions have a power, authority and opportunity to ruin people in the business community, more terrible than what any police official had over citizens in the old days. But the conscience of the present rulers does not reach up to the old British regime level, and collections from the business community will not be given up. The Congress Party insists that it must go on.

It was suggested to the Congress Party that whoever may be in power, there should be a six months' interregnum for party government, and a non-party administration should carry on during the election period, under the President and the Governors in their respective jurisdictions. But this too is not to be looked at by the greedy and power-mad party which has enjoyed office and cannot live without it. The Congress feels that it should hold full and obvious power during the election period. It is only then they can do many things to deceive and corrupt the voters and buy the votes of large groups. Not only the substance of power, but the convincing appearance of it, is felt to be necessary in order that the party may be voted in for another long period, so that corruption may go on in geometrical progression.

"If we are not to have company money, how can we win?" "If we step out of Government the voters will not vote for us but will vote as they please." This is what the members of the once great Indian National Congress say to themselves and in unashamed manner reject the suggestion of an interval of no-party rule and a ban on the exploitation of company funds for election expenditure.

Huge sums were collected during the last elections according to the open admission of the most party-minded

minister among them all, and bigger levies have been proposed at private conferences for spending during the coming elections. There may be a lot of private speculation in the affair but, allowing for such misdemeanours, the sum available for spending on Congress Party candidates leaves no room for fair and honest elections.

The double sin in the mind of the Congress Party in this connection—the resolve to misuse authority and to utilise the power of money—has been fully exposed in a manner amounting to a clear confession. Yet, such is the effect of continued authority among a subject people, that they are apathetic and silent. And this is what the Congress Party men rely upon. What do they care if the disclosure is a capital exposure? The exposure will soon be forgotten and men and women will not vote for communists. They will vote for a 'stable' government. Tyranny will indeed be stable if the conscience and courage of the people go to sleep. Awake courage, awake conscience, if democratic government is not to be lost by desuetude! Remember that dharma and dharma alone must win. This is the old and the true teaching. Do not believe that there is safety in yielding to fear. It is suicide and such suicide leads to a world of darkness, to life without light.

4

Enriching Party Chest

Moral principle is the foundation of sound polity. But our ruling clique has successfully voted out in the Lok Sabha the proposal to stop the practice of collecting 'donations' from companies working under steel-bound regulations in our welfare state. The opposition to this immorality was frank and fierce. Some few of the members of the Congress Party were quite ashamed of it all, but the party is shameless.

"It is to please and appease those who are in power, and have patronage to distribute, that people contribute to corrupt. It is no use hiding facts. Let us face facts as they are. I appeal to the Government as a member of the party to withdraw it. It will bring bad name to the party. We do not want any contribution from persons who have no faith in our ideology."

Shri Tyagi* asked the Government to make it clear that these contributions would not be tax-free. If they were tax-free, he said, the elections would be fought at the expense of the public exchequer. He wanted a probe to be made into the growing concentration of industries and wealth in a few hands.

The ruling party has undertaken to put a ceiling on this form of corruption! We may as well pass a law that a government official may take no more of bribes in a single instance than the amount of the official's salary for one year. Moderate corruption is worse than moderate drinking, for which pro-alcohol people plead so vigorously.

As the arguments against the practice of the Congress exploiting its position of power in a regimented economy,

* Shri Mahavir Tyagi, former Minister of Defence Production, in the Nehru Cabinet.

and extracting contributions to the party chest from business firms, covered not only the political immorality of it but also the misappropriation of shareholders' money for purposes not contemplated by the objects of the company, the Government seized the latter ground and has sought to mislead the public and perhaps Parliament, too, by accommodating the Opposition by a so-called ceiling based on a percentage of the profits earned. This may be soothing to those easily deceived by appearances. The high incidence of tax on profit makes the permitted ceiling on such legalized mis-expenditure pointless. The graver and the real evil of the practice lies in the political crime involved, in the use of the enormous power arising from the numerous fears and favours exercisable by the ruling party in the regimentation of business, for the extraction of political toll and enrichment of the party chest.

A party that gets into power will, by reason of this practice in the context of a 'developing economy', be enabled to accumulate enormous funds, which can defeat all the purposes of the law restraining corrupt practices at elections. It can perpetuate itself for all time in a country where votes are easily bought, leaving only violence as a means to change governments. The legalization of the government party collecting funds for election purposes from businessmen placed by the law, at its mercy, in every stage and incident of their occupation is an axe laid at the root of parliamentary democracy. It reduces the five-yearly general elections to a farce.

5

Ill-Gotten Money

However brazen the face that the Congress Party and its great bosses put on, the public in India are not going to consider as something respectable, or allowed by convention, the blackmail that the party is levying on the industrial, the commercial, the transport, the film and all other communities who have money, and have also good reasons to fear the displeasure of the ruling party. It is true there has been a breakdown of moral values in the wake of the two world wars. But there is still a great deal of talk on *sheela* and *dharma* in India, and there is no lack of V.I.Ps giving moral advice to the people of this country and even to other nations. There is the platform in Rajghat on the Jumna river, on which wreaths are periodically and on special occasions laid, which symbolises not power but the *dharma* that Gandhiji preached and thought he had left to responsible leaders after him to continue preaching. This nation-wide blackmail and the net of terror on which its success is based, are black repudiations of all that Gandhiji aimed at, *satya, ahimsa* and *abhaya.*

It is not a tide of the masses or the spirit of the times that is making this black chapter of our history, but individual men of power. The masses still seem inclined to be honest, but alas, they are not left alone. The people are brave but, alas they are caught in the barbed entanglements of the State which does not hesitate to exercise its power on any individual in any occupation. How can family and business face the ruin that a permit-and-license regime can, at any moment, bring down on them?

The writing is on the wall. Such brazen immorality nature cannot tolerate. Power and money have an intrinsic factor that breeds rivalry and self-destruction. The Con-

gress has only two alternatives before it, to survive by wisely reducing its power and avoiding the evils of ill-gotten wealth, or to be swallowed up in the corruptions and rivalries that result from an excess of power and pelf. Not party discipline or hush-hush, but a removal of the causes that breed rivalries and corruptions, can alone cure the ruling party's diseases that are forced on the public attention day in and day out now.

6

Voters and Ballot Boxes: Reverse the Procedure

A recently published book in America gives data and interesting conclusions about money spent in electioneering campaigns in that country. For a much richer people than we are, the estimated total of a hundred crores is really not staggering in the background of the money spent by candidates and government in poverty-stricken India.

To the question 'Does money win elections?' the study reported in this book gives the following answer: Money has more influence on party nomination than on the outcome of electoral contests. The giving of money for electoral campaigns is felt by the rich people of that country as a mark of civil virtue. A few take out insurance by donating to both parties and to competing candidates.

Another conclusion of this American study of electioneering may not apply to India—that he who pays the piper does not always call the tune. Maybe this 'not always' means, more often than not, it does.

It seems in America millions of people contribute, not just a few 'fat cats'. Altogether we are told about three million persons donated money to a party or candidate in the 1952 elections.

We have a very important conclusion brought out in this study about election laws. "Unrealistic limits on the amount of spending and giving encourage a cynical dishonesty; and financial management is manipulated to fit impossible statutory requirements." This has also been referred to by many observers in India. The current Congress Party collections bear no relation to the limits prescribed in the People's Repre-

sentation Act. The party probably plans suitable manipulation 'to fit the statutory requirements'.

In a poor country such as India is, it is inexcusable waste to follow the pattern of Western electioneering. Among all the things that rightly cry for nationalization, elections stand first. If voting is a public duty and democracy should be based on direct universal suffrage in this continental terrain, the procedure of the ballot-box should be reversed. The ballot-box should be taken to the voter at State expense instead of asking the voters to go to the booths. The procedure of census operations should *mutatis mutandis* be adopted at elections. Mobile polling booths should serve the people instead of asking voters to move to the polling stations and making ineffective laws to regulate the engaging of conveyances by candidates and parties. This revolutionary change will, in the net result, be less expensive to the nation than the present competitive private industry principle forced on candidates. And there will be less scope for corrupt practices. Hurdles there are, but they can be overcome.

7

Should Elections be a Private Enterprise?

The air is full of references to the burden of taxation. But a new unofficial tax has sprung into existence as a result of a single party continuing in office without break for fifteen years. The ruling party levies a new *ad valorem* tax over and above the heavy income-tax levied by the State. Unless the electoral procedure is changed completely this new, unhealthy and burdensome tax will persist. The heavy levy of the ruling party for its election funds is enforced with greater regularity and vigour, and collected with greater promptitude, than any income-tax or other lawfully imposed tax. It is collected by ministers and presidents of Congress committees with no feeling of shame or delicacy. It is levied on *ad valorem* basis where there are a large number to be exploited and on a very liberal *ad-hoc* basis where the victims are few and select. This scandalous levy, which in course of time is likely to engender many abuses and misappropriations, must be resisted tooth and nail.

But apart from resistance we should see that election procedure is made inexpensive and orderly and that real democracy is given a chance to emerge. Every voter must be given his card by the State, and not by the candidate who is eager to get his vote. A little thinking out of the rut into which we have got will make it clear that it is the obligation of the State as distinguished from political or other parties to acquaint the adult citizen with his valuable republican right. The State through its permanent officials should give him his voting card which should enable him to know his number in the rolls and exercise his right without his having to be informed and pestered by candidates and their agents. The permanent officials of the State must be presumed to be, and should be gradually trained to be strictly non-party in all their administrative acts including election work. Otherwise

there is no chance for democracy. Administrative duties should be done with strict judicial impartiality. Those who run the administration as permanent officials should be disabused of the prevailing notion that part of their loyalty is to help the ruling party to win.

The distribution of voting cards ought to be done by officials well before the polling week. All propaganda by candidates and parties should stop a week or so before the polling date. Personal visits by canvassers should be made illegal during that brief period. The collection of votes in polling booths should be replaced by mobile boothvans manned by suitable officials and staff. Provision for agents to watch in the interests of the respective candidates (which is now made in the polling stations) should be made in these mobile units. It is only such procedure that will secure proper voting, reduce corruption to the minimum, and bring election expenditure down to a very great extent. All corrupt practices take place in the course of the procedure which, it is suggested here, should be transferred from candidates and their agents to the permanent officials of State.

At present elections are practically a private enterprise with large capital investments! This is unadulterated evil and should go, being replaced by the State taking over the greater part of the work and of the expense on a strict non-party basis. Over and above this, and indeed topping it all, the ruling ministers should hand over their reins of office at least six months before polling day to the President of the Union and the Governors of the States (as the case may be), who should run the administration with the assistance of the permanent officials. The census operations should be the model for the electoral arrangements. This will cleanse the whole atmosphere of the many foul infections that now prevail during election time.

I know that details will have to be worked out for this scheme to be made practical and effective. A special committee should work out all the details which, I guess, will be easy if there is a will to do it. Those who have successfully

conducted the census operations can be charged with this work of drafting the new procedure. I am certain they will produce a good, workable scheme.

The net gain both to the administration and to democratic ideals will be tremendous. The representatives of the people thus elected will be much more independent in a real sense. Candidates will not be stooges of those who help them with money and pull the wires from behind in their own interests. The present scale of expenditure, which has been accepted as a necessary evil by candidates, is truly incongruous. It is out of all proportion to the prevailing standard of life and, in many ways, lowers the moral standards of both the defeated and the successful candidates, and in the total result lowers the moral standards of the assemblies formed under such a system. The representatives naturally strive to make up for what they have spent in the elections. I do not wish to go further into the evil, but earnestly commend to the public this scheme of reformed electoral procedure based on the census operations.

8

The Canker of License-Permit-Quota Raj

The papers have all hailed the Santhanam Committee's Report* for publicly notifying the truth about the state of Denmark. The truth was well-known but had not been confessed or publicly declared in an official report. The remedy will be worse than the disease, if in order to police officials and quasi-officials we call for an enormous organization of additional officials and additional expenditure. It is needless to point out, again, that experience has told us that new as well as old officials offer a fair field for the application of the rule of every one having his price. The *Hindu* has written a long editorial, one sentence in which is worth its weight in gold, if such weighing were possible. "There can be no doubt that in recent years corruption has increased primarily because of the extension of controls and the proliferation of officials administering a multiplicity of regulations in which there is a wide element of discretionary power." This is a long sentence meaning that the increased corruption is due to the license-permit-quota raj. Let us treat the cause, not police the symptom, if we hope to cure the patient. Further proliferation of officials is not the remedy. The new officials, too, will exercise powers in which there will be "a wide element of discretionary power", squaring the disease instead of reducing it.

The Santhanam Committee has repeated the Swatantra Party's plea for a total and real ban on contributions by companies to party funds. This was supported by all Opposition parties but rejected by the ruling party. These contributions are a part, and an integral part, of the license-permit-raj. Such contributions to the party in power would be impossible but for the 'wide element of discretionary power' exercised in the administration of the license-permit-raj. And

* Report (1964) of the Committee appointed by the Government of India to suggest measures for Prevention of Corruption under the Chairmanship of Shri K. Santhanam.

now as the *Statesman* has pointed out the powers of interfering in the affairs of companies have been greatly increased, thereby increasing the power of extorting contributions. Here too the basic remedy lies in the direction of reducing the expenses of elections held under the Constitution, on the basis of universal suffrage, in a country of 450 millions and of continental length and breadth. The whole procedure must be examined by fresh minds with a talent for initiative and uninhibited by want of precedents. The maximum portion of all the work involved should be undertaken by the State at public expense, on a non-party basis, leaving only the barest necessary minimum for being handled by parties and candidates at their own expense. A mobile organization for taking the poll can be evolved, if we give up the notion that we cannot do what has not been done in other democratic countries. There was no such big country and big population as ours suddenly put under a centralised universal suffrage vote, and we cannot therefore expect to find help from precedents. We must think for ourselves. We must make it possible for a fairly honest satisfactory poll to be taken on behalf of a poor and worthy candidate who stands by himself. The machinery of election should not be his responsibility but that of the State. There is no hope for democracy if this is not done.

But how is a party to defeat the Congress which is fattening on the license-permit-raj? How can a new party get into power as long as the present expensive system stands unchanged? Along with many other vicious circles, this stands in the way of honest democracy and good government arriving in our country. If the people realise the seriousness of the matter, the voice of God, which it is said is identical with the people's voice, can help to put an end to the evil, overcoming all obstacles.

Swaraj is not worth the trouble we took to achieve it, if we cannot make it possible for a worthy but poor man or a party that cannot loot the commercial community to get into Parliament. Independence was not worth the sacrifices made for it if we cannot find through it a good, honest, efficient government for the people.

9

State Neutrality in Elections

The reports of the meeting of party leaders convened by the Election Commissioner go to indicate that party leaders did not welcome the idea of mobile booths but recommended a larger number of polling-booths instead. I can guess the fears of the party leaders about mobile vans going to the voters and registering votes at voters' residences. We are likely to take an exaggerated view of the opportunity this would give to the party in office to tamper with the votes. The mobile van that is suggested, I wish to point out, will carry the whole complement of persons who today find places in each polling-booth, and there can be as complete a watch on the procedure as there is today.

It is not only the distance that matters, to be made up for by increasing the number of booths. The greatest evil is corrupt practice which attains its peak in the process of party workers' and candidates' agents picking up voters at their houses and conveying them to the polling-booths. This must be replaced by neutral official action if we wish to put an end to, or at least greatly reduce, corruption. It is the last-minute bribe that buys votes and, so to say, bodily carries the voter to the booth.

The Election Commission can certainly devise measures to make this scheme of mobile vans practicable instead of continuing the present practice of candidates bringing voters to the booth. The officials of Government must be trusted in the last resort; we cannot run parliamentary government if we cannot trust the officials, despite occasional lapses.

The mobile booth must be supplemented by a neutralization of Government for a certain period before the elections, by President's rule replacing the party-in-power during the

interregnum, if not for six months, at least for three months. As a matter of fact, even now during the time of the elections all the ministers are invariably engaged only in their party-campaign, official affairs being handed over to the permanent officials. The Gonda affair,* which is only a discovered illustration and not an exception, shows the necessity for displacing party-government during election-time by neutral rule.

The mobile booth is an absolute essential if we wish to stop corruption as well as make the elections much less expensive. The temporary displacement of party-government during the election campaign would be an improvement of the highest order. It would demonstrate to the people as well as officials that the State is essentially neutral, in spite of party-rule under the parliamentary system. The display of this neutrality during election-time would be an excellent lesson to the whole electorate on the true nature of democracy and majority rule. This periodical displacement of party-rule would also greatly help good government by boosting the independence of the permanent officials and encouraging them when necessary to stand up to political pressures, which all are agreed are essential for good government.

All canvassing should cease a week before the collection of votes, and the voters should be left to themselves during that week.

India is too poor a country to bear the present expensive election campaign and is too sadly in need of good government and of a purge of corrupt practices. It is easy to reject, as impractical, schemes conceived to meet these requirements but we should endeavour to work on them and make them practical by suitable devices, and modifications. India is *sui generis,* the Indian Republic within the Commonwealth is *sui generis,* and direct elections cum adult suffrage and parliamentary centralised government for a population of 450 million are all without parallel. We should not look for or wait for precedents to make necessary reforms, but must try out new ways ourselves.

* Allegations of interference by the Ruling Party in the Gonda bye-election (1964).

The ruling party's present internal distractions and difficulties are mainly due to the expensiveness of election campaigns and the consequent total dependence of its adherents on the party's funds and the party's position and power. A scheme to make the elections less expensive and less corrupt will not only help the country but help the Congress Party itself to shed its sickness.

And let us remember that the sickness of the Congress Party is more than the sickness of a political party. The image of the Indian National Congress has not been completely wiped out; the illness of the Congress Party has an effect beyond the fortunes of the party. Much as we may like and try to treat the malady as appertaining only to the Congress Party, the national psychology suffers along with deterioration of the Congress Party. Changes in procedure adumbrated to make elections less expensive, in order to save democracy from becoming merely a facade to cover a perpetuated one-party rule, are of greater importance to the nation than may at first appear.

10

Money Influence and the Remedy for It

The esteemed elder statesman of U.S.A., Mr. David Lawrence, writes in his editorial in *US News and World Report* (a weekly magazine with a circulation of 1,850,000) what should be deemed most valuable support for my oft-repeated plea in respect of the burden of expense falling on candidates and political parties who have not the advantages which office and control of the economy give. Unless the heavy burden of expense is borne by Government wherever it is possible and legitimate, there is no prospect of making parliamentary democracy work properly in India. Mr. David Lawrence's approach deserves the earnest attention of the Election Commission and the Government of India. Mr. Lawrence, in his article, lays emphasis on the corrupting bias donations collected from individuals and private corporations give to the votes of those who have attained positions with such help.

"The issue is not a new one. Campaign expenses have risen tremendously in recent years, and only the very rich find it possible to run for public office without depending on contributions.

"Is there a way, therefore, by which campaigns can be financed by the Government itself, in order that office-bearers will not be put under obligation to groups or individuals who have contributed to their election? Certainly the total sum of money spent in a congressional election is not relatively large. Nor is it so big even in a presidential campaign that an appropriation for the expenses of each party would be too great for the American people to bear, especially if this assures that officials and legislative representatives in government will be independent-minded.

"The public generally is unaware of the financial burden imposed on candidates in federal State and local elections.

"But should all this be a personal expense?

"The best plan of all would be for the Government to provide for the expenses of nominees campaigning for federal office.

"The small amount of money that needs to be appropriated would be well worth what could be achieved by substituting it for the financing practices in the politics of today."

In India the mischief is not only the corrupting bias which obligations to individuals and companies give to the members elected to legislatures or appointed as ministers. The heavy expense of candidature keeps out everybody except those who can find money from rich friends and corporations. Many a person who would be an excellent member or minister is precluded from candidature by reason of the expense involved in informing voters of their voting rights and details in the voters' lists relating to the several voters. This information and this expense are repeated by all the candidates who contest. There is no reason why Government should not give all this information to the voters without making it necessary for candidates to do this. The expense of the Government for doing this would be much less than the total of the expenditure incurred for this purpose by the candidates and parties. We must remember in this connection that the electorates run into lakhs of voters.

Again there is no reason why Government should not arrange to collect votes from the voters direct at their residences instead of assuming that the voters would be able to go to the polling booths without the help of conveyance themselves. Candidates are today prohibited from helping voters with transport. All these unreasonable conditions would be obviated if the ballot-papers were taken to the voters by

electoral officials in mobile booths and the voters' preference recorded at each voter's residence.

The experiments made in a few places on these lines have been quite successful. The system should be universalized. Successful democracy calls for this change in procedure whatever be the additional burdens on Government on this account. It must be remembered that elections are held, not for the benefit of candidates who should therefore bear all the expense, but are held for the nation's benefit. It is legitimate that all the expense and trouble involved in collecting the votes of the electorate should be borne by Government. This reform will keep out the corruption and group intimidation that now play a large part in the elections, besides enlarging the scope for securing good and worthy candidates who are not in a position to incur the expense involved in an electoral contest.

The man or woman who gets to top power in New Delhi without being too scrupulous about how to retain power, has a vested interest in making elections too expensive. The person holding power can get any amount of money he or she needs, through the tight hold on tycoons which the Permit-License-Raj gives, and contrariwise starve all others in that respect. In addition, the expense of elections places a powerful instrument in the hands of the Prime Minister to keep his or her hold on those who sit on the ministerial chairs by a threat of dissolution of Parliament and throwing the Members into the costly mess of fresh elections if they are not obedient and suppress their own convictions however strong they may be.

Part II

TOWARDS GENUINE DEMOCRACY

11

Western Precedents

John Stuart Mill wrote in his book on Representative Government:

> Good government in India can be attained through far wider political conceptions than merely English or European practice can supply, and through a much more profound study of Indian experience and of the conditions of Indian government, than either English politicians or those who supply the English public with opinions have hitherto shown any willingness to undertake.

These words were written long ago when British statesmen were considering reforms. But the truth seen by the insight of great men, like John Stuart Mill, was not only for the occasion they wrote for, but valid for all time. We have seen the working of the ballot box in India. A vested interest has grown for the ruling party in the ballot box and in the servility of people which can be exploited through the tentacles of the 'welfare State'. The conditions of government now brought into existence, viz., all-embracing controls and regulations of all kinds over the business community, and the issue of subsidies of all kinds to influential groups in the rural area, make the ballot box together with general ignorance and cupidity into a vicious and gigantic vested interest for the Congress Party. Once put in power, the economic controls, licenses and monopolies, which it has in its power to give and take away, furnish it with the means of perpetuation for all time. The party collects funds from the big companies that are under its power, and make any opposition practically impossible. When this is pointed out by those interested in creating an Opposition Party against this Leviathan, it is made into an argument in its own favour.

"Ha! See they confess they can never win. Therefore, vote for us who will surely be the winning party."

Wrong-doing cannot, however, go on for ever. Nemesis is awaiting. There is a natural law that brings Evil's downfall by its own weight. It is this that led the Congress, in spite of the glaring immorality of the Opposition, to oppose the amendment to prohibit company funds being donated to it by managements depending on the favours and the good will of the Government. It is the same evil genius that leads them to say that they will not allow a care-taker government to rule during election. "There is no precedent for this in Western democracies," they say. There is no precedent for all that the Congress Party is doing to perpetuate its own power through the opportunities enjoyed when holding office, particularly through the Planning programme which gives it a long-term mortgage over the will of the voters. "We must have the money; we must have government in our hands; otherwise how can we win?" ask the Congress bosses. And there are people who still think the Congress is the only party that can rule, though this belief is growing less and less every day.

12

The Evil of Defections

Penal Code to deal with defections appears to be a rather light-hearted suggestion that has been made by the Union Law Ministry. It is suggested that if a defector accepts an office of profit following his defection, he will be guilty of corruption as defined in the amended Penal Code. A Churchill would be guilty of a criminal offence and convicted if he went over from the Liberal to the Conservative Party and became Prime Minister!

An honest politician may give up one party and attach himself to another party without any change in his political goals or ideology but, for instance, to bring about a stable government or to work under a leader he respects for the sum-total of his qualities. Can it not be seen that hypothetically one may seek to strengthen Sri Charan Singh* in UP and retain him as Chief Minister even though one may have to "defect" to achieve that purpose? We may not always be in a party on the basis of ideology. There are many honest considerations of political expediency alongside of ideology which can be good cause for attaching oneself to this or that party in a critical situation.

The proposal to simplify matters with the help of the Penal Code is naive. Party organizations find no place in the Constitution. Penal Code offences must rest on proof of a *mens rea* in every case.

The salaries provided in the normal course for ministers cannot be made into a dishonest motive for converting a political defection into a Penal Code offence when a minister's post is conferred on the politician. And would a dishonest politician escape from the new law if he renounced the salary attached to the office? He can make it profitable without

* Now Union Home Minister.

any salary attached. Political activities must be free and not laden with curbs to facilitate the mechanism of party politics not provided for in the Constitution. Where a member attaches himself to a party, he must depend on his then political opinion, if democracy is to be free. A citizen should not be considered a guilty person if he changes his opinion from one to another, however brief the interval of time may be. In short, what has to be achieved through public opinion and moral pressure cannot be sought to be tackled by the Criminal Code or even by a constitutional amendment. At the rate proposals are being made, we may even be told that a Congress four-anna member will be guilty of a criminal offence if he votes for a non-Congress party and gets in the course of events some office or benefit.

I would ask the Law Ministry to go slow and consult non-political jurists before making proposals to help political leaders.

This problem of party defections takes us to the issue raised by the recent UP Proclamation.* The Governor is the Central Government's nominee and known to be acting as its agent from hour to hour receiving instructions therefrom. Can the desirability of a stable government supersede the right of the legislature in a State and give the Governor the authority so to advise the Central Government as to bring about President's rule? The support of a majority vote in the Lok Sabha given to the proclamation makes no difference. Political decisions of men dealing with public affairs including MPs and MLAs may vary from day to day during times of crisis. They cannot be rigidly tacked on as invariables to the political group to which they are attached. The authority conferred on the legislatures to form governments is a constitutional privilege which cannot be administered except by themselves. The Governor should act as observer and not as one who can intervene in the interests of what is called stability. The Article of the Constitution authorizing the imposition of President's rule on a State does not refer to the

* Presidential proclamation dated 16-4-1968 dissolving the U.P. Assembly and ordering mid-term poll.

stability of any proposed ministry. What is the standard measure of time for stability, no one can define.

In a sense the 'instability' of the Government is its very virtue in parliamentary democracy of the British pattern wherein a vote of no-confidence can come up at any moment and therefore the Executive must always be on its toes and not go to sleep on the strength of party affiliations made sacrosanct by grafting the Penal Code on the party system.

13

Functional and Proportional Representation

Quite a number of thinking people feel unhappy over the present system of representation in the legislative bodies of our country (as in other countries too) wherein territorial constituencies are, each one of them, represented by majority choices, and whereby in the net result although forty-five per cent of the voters in the country may be definitely ranged against a political party, the supreme national as well as State legislatures may not have even ten per cent of members to represent the forty-five per cent who voted against the majority party. Indeed today we do not see even so much as five per cent to represent an Opposition which really is more than forty per cent strong; it is by sheer local accidents that a few members manage under the present system to find their way into the legislatures. There are quite a few thinking men who feel that this is neither just nor conducive to good democratic government wherein everything should so greatly depend on debate. A substantial body of opinion in the country, which does by no means accept the majority party's view, goes completely and fatally unrepresented — fatal to true debate and just democratic decision. Public opinion is thus forced to depend for expressing itself on the press and other indirect and difficult means. The press, too, cannot easily throw away the hypnosis of an overwhelming majority in the legislatures supporting the ruling party and, therefore, often expresses itself in tones greatly muffled. The legitimate forum for giving expression to differing views on matters of national policies is the legislature, but its doors are closed against minority choices.

There is therefore a legitimate demand for some system of proportional representation. It is true that the executive arm of government based on any scheme of proportional

representation often displays instability and inefficiency. But without going into the merits of this issue of executive action, it is obvious that even if governments may be formed on the majority principle to the total exclusion of any minority representation, the legislatures which are the forum for public debate and should help the governments, from time to time, to frame their policies, ought to have members fairly representative of every substantial section of public opinion. This would not interfere with either the stability or efficiency of governments; on the other hand, it would help them to act with due circumspection in varying circumstances. A scheme of proportional representation in legislatures, which may not be too complicated for execution in a large country like ours, is therefore not to be ruled out as has been done so far, resulting in a black-out of important sections of public opinion.

Again, not only is it necessary to provide fair representation for substantial minority opinion by means of proportional representation, but we ought also to consider whether the legislatures should be merely consumers' unions as they are today, and whether they should not be modified to include representatives of those who produce, transport and distribute, and otherwise play most important constructive parts in the national economy. Today they are completely shut out by reason of the territorial constituencies and the majority principle. The consumers are always in a majority, but that does not mean that those who function, and have to function, in production and distribution have nothing useful to say and contribute towards the shaping of government's policies and the happiness of the people.

In the pre-Independence and pre-adult franchise days we had quite a number of representatives of industry and commerce and labour who played very useful part in the debates that preceded the shaping of laws and policies. These are all now pushed out and compelled to express themselves, if at all, in some other less effective ways. It is by no means established that this is a good thing. The defect is sought to be made up by a planning commission, which is hand-

picked and, working outside the legislature, seeks to gather opinions and data to help the Government with relevant advice on matters of policy. This is a weak and unsatisfactory substitute for the legitimate and direct expression of views by functional representatives of the national economy. What is called for is a substantial and satisfactory representation in the legislatures of those important sections of the population that function in production and trade and commerce and sustain the national economy.

The question arises whether an amendment of the Constitution in this direction is possible now after the grant, and enjoyment, of universal adult suffrage for many years. Reform becomes difficult by reason of vested interests, or a feeling akin to it, created by what has been done and has been in practice for a number of years. The intelligence of man need not however be baffled by this difficulty. We can create new institutions to make up for the defects experienced, instead of seeking to reform the scheme of representation in the existing legislatures. We can conceive of new institutions where we can have the debate and the active participation of the representatives of industry, trade, commerce and labour, whose wisdom may be integrated into the framework of legislative discussion. This would by-pass the vested interests of universal suffrage. An economic council based on functional representation, which may be large enough to provide suitable scope for full and active public debate on matters related to the national economy, and whose views and conclusions will have recognized importance in the framing of governmental policies, can be thought of and planned so as to avoid both conflict and impotence. Indeed this economic council can take the place of the present second chambers of the legislatures both in the States and at the Centre. At present the Rajya Sabha and the State legislative councils function mostly as dumping ground for favourites of the ruling party, for whom places cannot be found elsewhere. They do not in any way help in the shaping of policies. Although the debates are sometimes good, they serve no serious purpose. If these are substituted by duly

elected economic councils based on functional representation, a great defect would be remedied. Conceivably, there may be joint sessions of the legislature and the economic council, so that there may be free interplay of views and ideas and policies developed on that helpful basis. If thus a modicum of functional representation as well as proportional representation are integrated into the official forums of public debate before policies are shaped, it would be a great advance towards true democracy from what today is seriously defective in that respect.

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other name you may choose to give it, according to its particular colour.

When a political party commanding certain adventitious advantages gets entrenched in power, it loses sight of these important principles and comes to look at the attacks of the Opposition parties as a kind of treason. The ruling party asks those who oppose it to win electoral support by such sheer strength as they can themselves gather as against all the resources the ruling party commands by reason of its holding office. When the Government has successfully seized all economic power, when it controls the activities and properties of all the men engaged in national production and distribution, these resources are tremendous. Opposition becomes as difficult as an armed insurrection against a government commanding a standing army and an armed police force always on duty everywhere.

If the principles enunciated above as essential for the sustenance of a well-ordered parliamentary democracy are accepted, it follows that a government which is in office should take steps to make the Constitution a reality, by doing everything to help a sound and strong Opposition to grow up. Certainly, it should at least refrain from doing or maintaining what prevents such growth. A party in power is free to exercise its privileges, but its responsibility to sustain the Constitution remains intact. It cannot say, "It is not my business to build up an Opposition or help one coming up". Without an adequate Opposition, the constitutional structure is only half-built.

What I say may read like a college essay. But everything said herein has a practical bearing on current affairs, which those who are concerned in the politics of our country can realize without expatiation. Far from being a mere dissertation, it is very topical and calls for current application.

The neglect of this primary duty of the ruling party—

to see to the emergence and growth of a balancing Opposition —has led not only to bad government but to moral deterioration in the ruling party itself. The deterioration has now come to a head and has started compelling the attention of good men in the party itself.

15

Towards Genuine Democracy—2

EDUCATION vs. LITERACY

Critics of the present state of affairs in our country refer to the electoral scheme on which our democracy is based and deplore that democracy cannot be expected to work well because of the illiteracy of the electorate formed on the universal adult franchise basis, which we have adopted without sufficient thought. They feel that the franchise should be restricted to literates.

Many, if not the larger number, of these critics do not distinguish between literacy and education; and those who realize the difference do not dare to ask for the bigger thing. No one would now agree, to any substantial educational qualification to be entitled to vote. The reduction of the universal franchise by laying down a substantial educational qualification would mean an enormous reduction, and even if it were possible, it might turn out to be a retrograde step instead of an improvement. I do not here wish to suggest what may be done, because it would be merely academic and serve no purpose. Any change of the Constitution in that direction is not likely to be accepted by Parliament or even by the ministers, who are all returned under the existing scheme; and the Constitution cannot be altered without their consent.

I only wish here to point out that while true education could be a cure, literacy is no cure for the ills we deplore. True education, again, does not consist in the obtaining of minimum quantity of information in certain matters which is obtainable in schools and colleges. We must crown that information with character. Otherwise no amount of

knowledge-load in mathematics or departments of science including even psychology would result in any benefit. Education is real only if it confers on the recipient the capacity to know and choose Good, and the strength to reject Evil.

Choosing by itself, if it stops at mentally distinguishing Good from Evil, is not enough. Most people, even the most uneducated among us, can distinguish Good from Evil—thanks to the many millennia of our civilization emphasizing *dharma*. What is wanted is the capacity to choose in the real sense, to be prepared to work and to suffer for that choice. It is only then that one can be called truly educated. And in this sense there are many who are educated though they are not literate. And many there are who passed through school and college and acquired degrees but who are yet not educated in this true sense.

Every people has its own history, culture and customs. So far as we in India are concerned, whatever the particular community to which we belong, we have, all of us, inherited traditions, scriptures, and literature, which are silently waiting to serve us. We have been led in recent days to ignore this inheritance in favour of seeking wealth. Material wealth is a moving target and does not stay fixed. It flies higher and higher as we try to reach it. It is through the spoken word and pious worship and rituals that the knowledge as well as the capacity to work and suffer for the Good were acquired and conserved by our people through the ages. And it is this old and tried instrument that we must use, over and above the production of new literature whose lessons can be directly absorbed by those who have learnt to read.

Mass education, in the sense herein explained, which is to result not only in knowledge and mental preference of the Good but in the capacity and readiness to work and suffer for it, cannot, as far as I see, be organized except on a religious base, religious in the broadest sense. To misunderstand the 'secularity' to which people think we are pledged, and to treat religion as untouchable is one of the many unfortunate follies our Government has fallen into. It is not

impossible, or even very difficult, to deal with and include religion in a nation-wide effort to make men truly religious, each in the way shown by his or her own religion, and add to it a spirit of understanding and respect for other people's religion and way of life. The conclusion of the matter as I see it is that parliamentary democracy will be a waste of expense and produce no good, unless this true education of the people is undertaken by a general consensus among all statesmen and politicians.

16

Parliamentary Democracy in India—1

BASIC ADAPTATIONS

The future of parliamentary democracy, as of any other institution resting on popular confidence, depends more on the justice, fair-mindedness and efficiency of those who work the administration under it than any other single factor. The popular acceptance of that work as good and beneficial gives durability to parliamentary democracy more than any academic element. The work of any institution, again, depends on the character and the policies of the individuals who happen to be continually in charge of it.

There have been proposals in various quarters to abolish direct election as being fraught with too much wasteful expenditure and serious defects, and to adopt, instead, indirect election as more suitable for a poor nation of vast size and little educational preparation for the direct franchise.

Of course every remedy has its own defects. The greatest difficulty with indirect election is that we cannot have mere electoral colleges with no other duties and powers attached except to vote. This is bound to lead to corruption. This could be overcome by giving responsible local duties and powers, over and above the mere voting function, to those elected at lower levels. We would have, so to say, an elected bureaucracy with vast powers at all levels. Indirect election will have to go with decentralized administration by elected office-bearers. There will be plenty of intimidation, want of integration and tyranny, but the people will get the government they deserve, which is an inescapable harmony, and they may get used to it. Election expenditure—at least that part of it which is public—would be greatly reduced.

There is much to be said for indirect elections with power and responsibility in all the tiers. It would indeed be a long-

term plan to educate the people in the art of government. At the end of a long period of travail, the legislatures at State and Central level would be manned by persons with real experience gained at the cost of much national distress.

The party system which has come down to us from Britain has not pleased many people. Saints and others have expressed their disgust with it. They suggest a no-party system. For this, too, in principle, but only in principle, there is a great deal to be said. But we cannot invent a no-party scheme capable of being worked. It cannot be worked in any unitary or federal system of Indian governance. The advocates of the no-party scheme of government therefore must link their proposal to a complete decentralized scheme of government.

"Party divisions, whether on the whole operating for good or evil, are things inseparable from free government. This is a truth which, I believe, admits little dispute, having been established by the uniform experience of all ages," said Edmund Burke. Can we by any trick or law—would it be just even if it were possible?—prevent people from coming together over some important question or principle which cannot be disposed of in a short struggle, but which must be tackled through generations? This coming together in a crusade would mean a party.

Without going into the practicability of any scheme of representation of the people based on, or more or less on, the no-party principle, one may put this aside for the present and examine other ideas which at least approach the problem from the no-party ideal without going so far as to say: Have done with all political parties.

There is the suggestion that we may have a permanent scheme of coalition governments—such as, I am told, prevails in a way in Uruguay. In that South American republic, the President, like his counterpart in the U.S.A., is the supreme executive and functions not merely ceremonially as in India, but as Prime Minister with even greater authority

in some respects than the British Cabinet or the British Prime Minister.

However, the President in Uruguay is not a single person but a small composite committee wherein the Opposition party has also a share, holding half the number of seats which the majority party holds. This is a kind of constitutional scheme for coalition between majority and minority parties which has been working for a long time in that country, apparently without any hitch.

There is a strong plea in some quarters for a coalition government to be accepted as the normal scheme of governance in India. There are well-known objections to this proposal, principally the point that it would do away with full responsibility which is essential for good government. But as against this there is much that can be said in favour of constant interplay of wisdoms and ideas between opposing groups even in the chief executive organ of government.

We shall now go back to John Stuart Mill's powerful plea in favour of proportional representation. That great devotee of freedom of thought and enemy of every kind of suppression of liberty strongly welcomed the then new idea of proportional representation in parliamentary government as greatly contributing to the actual realization of the principles of liberty as against the traditional and rigid majority system which often suppresses the real majority view. The single transferable vote was enthusiastically welcomed by John Stuart Mill because it mathematically offered fuller scope for a real majority to issue out of elections. But subsequent experience has shown how cliques can manipulate and render even mathematics impotent.

Experience has also shown that the system may undermine the stability of governments. The experience of France has particularly demonstrated this, and it is only the continued efficiency of the permanent services that has kept France going in spite of governments falling once in a few weeks.

It is not an impractical proposition by itself for India, but it is extremely doubtful whether those who have now got into positions of importance will ever agree to the single transferable vote, or to any other scheme of proportional representation, or whether such a scheme is at all feasible in a country where the illiteracy percentage is high. All constitutions create certain vested interests and change becomes impossible where change is to be approved by those who have developed a vested interest in the existing order.

One reform however is very necessary and also very feasible. The unconscionable and grievous expenditure on elections, which gives overwhelming advantages to money-power, can be largely eliminated if the responsibility of getting people to know that they have a vote to give is taken over entirely by the government instead of leaving it to political parties and candidates. Elections now are largely, so to say, private enterprise, whereas this is the one thing that should be first nationalised. Why should not government officials, who revise and get the electoral rolls ready on the basis of universal adult suffrage, also give to each voter his voting card duly numbered for presentation at the polling booth? Why should political parties be entrusted with this task of distributing electoral information, which furnishes abundant opportunities for corruption?

Again, the voting may be done in mobile polling booths operated by the government. Instead of the voters being conveyed by political parties and candidates to the polling booth, the government's mobile polling booth can go down every street in town and village and collect the votes. This would eliminate 99 per cent of the corrupt practices and leave the one per cent, linked to the honesty and efficiency of the officials engaged for the purpose. It would also furnish justification and reasonable grounds for enforcing the exercise of the franchise instead of leaving it to the pressure of interested parties.

If census operations have to be conducted through house-to-house visits by officials in the interest of accuracy

and full information, much more important, in the interest of honesty and proper appraisement of public opinion, is it to do the elections on a house-to-house visit by the officials of the State on a non-party basis. The total drain on national resources would be less if the State does this instead of leaving it to candidates and parties interested in corrupt practices and the suppression of facts. Further it should not be forgotten that it is the proper duty of the state, as distinguished from parties, to take the voters' lists and the information contained in them to the voters direct and it is a failure of duty to leave that task to be farmed out to political parties who have their own interest here in suppression and falsification.

I have ended my desultory disquisition with this procedural reform but it is the one thing that may save parliamentary democracy in India from acquiring a worse and worse name as the years go by. I conclude as I began, emphasizing that parliamentary democracy's popularity—and, therefore, life—depends on the honest and efficient administration that prevails under it—I would even say, which survives in spite of it. The greatest and ever-encouraging example before us is British administration and British parliamentary democracy.

17

Parliamentary Democracy in India—2

POLLUTING ENCRUSTATIONS

The general opinion that the best form of government is parliamentary democracy has acquired almost the character of religious belief. This is due especially to the various freedoms enjoyed under parliamentary democracy, including particularly the freedom of opinion and expression thereof enjoyed by members of Parliament. As long as Parliament members are free to express their opinions on the issues before them, this method of ascertaining the people's wishes works well. But owing to the way in which politics and the power associated with political influence have developed, the party system has grown and shaped itself into a strict control of the votes of members. The freedom of opinion associated with parliamentary democracy has become an illusion. Members are compelled to vote according to order and not according to their conviction. Hence, the word 'whip' has come rightly to represent the coercive element in voting. Members have become horses or hounds driven by party leaders.

Wrong becomes right by usage and convention. The Constitution has given no place to the party system and certainly no place for the coercion imposed by party leaders on members of Parliament. The justification for control and coercion is that it is the price paid for the advantages enjoyed by the members through the influence of the group acting together. Political parties have thus approximated to trade unions organized for wage increases and reduction of working hours. Edmund Burke would have expressed his opinion very strongly against this erosion of freedom in democracy, but present-day leaders of democracy are corrupted by power and have become insensitive to the deterioration that has happened. They are keen sup-

porters of what is called 'discipline', that is to say of voting irrespective of conviction. This has become a vested interest of the leaders of parties. Loyalty to party should be based on conviction and not on coercion, although disloyalty as a result of bribery must be relentlessly put down. The freedom of a member to express his own opinion on matters arising from time to time will not damage a party's strength or influence but will add to its good image.

Apart from these reflections, the question still remains whether the Constitution as it stands allows the direct or indirect coercion and intimidation practised by leaders of parties and particularly those in office. They are truly breaches of privilege. If present-day politics has come to permit such coercive practices it should be done with a certain amount of guilt-consciousness. The exercise of party coercion is intrinsically an infringement of the freedom of members and the privilege of Parliament—unless indeed we recognize officially the right of members to barter their opinions and freedom in exchange for personal advantages and convert Parliament into a market. At any rate this process should not be gone through in bathing suits, but should be something that must be decently covered. Strictly speaking, the threats of 'severe notice' by party bosses and the like are all breaches of the privilege of the House. They nullify the justifications advanced for parliamentary democracy. We may at least avoid the indecency of flagrant nullification.

I conclude with the following quotation from Macaulay in his *Lays of Ancient Rome, Horatius:*

> Then none was for a party,
> Then all were for the State,
> Then the great man helped the poor
> And the poor man loved the great.

Let me pray that these truthful lines about ancient Rome may inspire our leaders. Let me dream and hope that our motherland will rise, free from the pollutions that have enveloped us, and have a true parliamentary democracy to rule it.

18

Prospects of Democracy in India

A combined effort on the part of all democratic Opposition parties must be directed to the appointment of a commission to investigate and recommend a scheme for making elections very much less expensive for candidates and for putting the recommendations through as soon as possible, overcoming the opposition of the ruling party bosses through the pressure of public opinion expressed in the press and otherwise. If this should fail, parliamentary democracy is bound to disappear and a kind of totalitarian one-party government will take its place.

Experience has taught us that political liberty is in jeopardy in all such arrangements whatever be the justification. Soon the rule of law comes to an end, the independence of the judiciary evaporates and the press becomes subservient. Trade unions and other sectional organizations, as soon as they assert themselves, come under the strict regulations of the party in power. There may be differences and discussions inside the party where the leader sagaciously allows it, but it is monolithic all the same. The more powerful section inside always prevails and does not permit any opposition to be active or express itself publicly and acquaint the people with its views. It is given no opportunity to canvass public support. Such canvassing would be treason and sooner or later the prison accommodates the dissidents.

A pluralist party structure is absolutely essential for a democracy to function as such. It is argued that all party organizations are really oligarchies. Even assuming this, it is obvious that there must be such countervailing oligarchies, keeping each other in order, so that democracies may be really democracies. In the cracks between these countervailing oligarchies, the individual has some chance to draw

free breath, although all political parties may deteriorate into oligarchies. The one-party democracies where the ruling party faces no powerful opposition, or none at all, always end in totalitarianism and in the wreckage of individual freedom without which there can be no real democracy. No party in office can be assumed to have perfect wisdom. Unless another party is in a position to criticize and point out errors in open debate, there is no democracy.

This is the point at which we can examine the problems and the prospects of democracy in India.

The expensive nature of the elections is a big block in the way of a good strong Opposition party forming itself and functioning in Parliament in India. The economic hold of the party at present in power makes the rise of any other party extremely difficult if not impossible. And one-party rule adopting what is called socialism means total economic power vesting in the ruling party, making the rise of any other parliamentary party impossible. The poverty of the people, which we wish to remove but which until it is removed is there, produces two results: one is that no others but those helped by the party in power can afford to go through an expensive election; the other is that votes are easily purchased in large blocks so that there is no free electoral system.

The single-party control over Indian affairs and the simultaneous elections to the State legislatures and to Parliament, practically on the same issues or on the same ideologies, together lead to the extinction of State governments as independent units united in a federation. The Union becomes a legal fiction. The State dwindles into local boards completely controlled by the central organization of the monolithic party. And when a policy is adopted by this monolithic government of State-control over the whole national economy, it leads to total loss of individual freedom. Such freedom as prevails is enjoyed only by license and permission at the option of the central authority.

One can state the problems. When we proceed to appraise prospects we are in a difficult field. Mice and men may propose and plan. But times and circumstances change. Calculations go wrong and God disposes. When things go very wrong, anything may happen. It is dangerous to fore-tell; because often fore-telling itself brings about catastrophes.

As against this dark picture, I may express the hope that the people of our country have solid virtues and may not allow things to go wrong. They may assert themselves and save democracy in spite of single-party tyrannies and their cumulative powers. When good government fades away from Asiatic regimes, the nexus between the civil administration and the strong defence forces organized and maintained by government gets weakened. When this happens the forces, maintained by the nation for security, themselves become a great danger to democracy. We should not forget this. We should also remember the presence of a communist party with a strong base among industrial workers, always bent on subverting democracy and intent on establishing a minority regime in the name of the oppressed proletariat. The defence forces and the radio stations and the communist party are not minor elements of danger, although as long as good government is running smoothly, these are not only not dangers but very useful each in its own way.

The front article in a recent *New Leader* issue written by Juan Bosch, who was President of the Dominican Republic until 25th of September last, begins with the following paragraph full of meaning for those who are interested in the problems of democracy and its prospects:

"Forty days before the military leaders took me prisoner in the National Palace of the Dominican Republic, the Ambassador of the United States, John Bartlow Martin, said to me: 'Mr. President, your popularity is intact'."

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Public Expenditure and National Welfare

> "Those who stayed on ended by believing that winning elections was the chief content of politics. History being more subtle they ended up losing elections as well."

The above comment was made by someone about some other country and some other people. But it is an apt warning to the intelligentsia of India and in particular to the Congress. Unless we put in more ethical content in our lives, political as well as social, the people of India will not be in love with us. They are simple folk but the fundamental shrewdness of good people helps them to discriminate. Window-dressed austerities have not much pull with them.

The reduction of salaries or allowances by five or ten or even fifteen per cent will make no impression on them. It will not lessen the people's burden of taxation or the distress caused by rising prices. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and it is unwise to reduce to danger point the salaries of men holding posts of great powers. A Robert Clive will have to come to remove corruption and oppression. Salaries should be high enough to help withstand the inescapable temptations of power posts. Economy in such matters does not help finance and cannot deceive anybody. What the people want is not a sadistic impoverishment of those who exercise authority. That may be the desire of frustrated competitors in the same field. Political rivals may derive satisfaction, but it is not what the people want. They want taxation to be easier, and cost of living to be less burdensome.

The whole world, it is true, is now subjected to the malady of inflation. But in India, where even very poor men have a number of idle unemployed dependents to sup-

port, it has assumed a relatively intolerable pitch. Inflation has not only increased the price of essentials and therefore the cost of living at all the grades of life; it has reduced the value of whatever little saving the middle classes had made for some insurance for old age. This is nothing but confiscation. A hundred rupees lent out or deposited somewhere or due from an insurance company or a provident fund is returned now, principal and interest together, amounting in real value to less than half of what had been thought was due. National welfare consists after all in the common man's domestic affairs. Unless this improves, there will not be that sense of peace and happiness which is welfare.

Progressive taxation is an emasculating deceiver. We must cut our coat according to the cloth. Let us remember in the application of the maxim, the cloth is a living sentient thing, not dead or anaesthetized matter. Costly preparations for war are of no real use in the present condition of the world. It is just waste of valuable resources and a mortgaging of the future to foreign Powers. Military science is proceeding so fast that the preparations made with great difficulty and cost this year will be of no use or consequence next year. Let us gather the courage of peace and righteousness and save our resources from being wasted on what is called defence and spend them for the improvement of the daily lives of our men and women which would be truer defence. Let us do this at least for a dozen years and then we may appraise conditions and adjust our policy.

We must instil integrity in public expenditure at all levels. It is deplorably absent now at all levels. It has almost reached the stage of callousness than which there can be nothing more fatal. Those who are employed to do government work should be paid satisfactorily, but they should deem it a shame to be careless or dishonest. It should be a shame not only to be known to be dishonest. Dishonesty must itself be felt as a great shame in the act and before it is discovered.

Unemployment should be tackled by real employment and not by a wasteful bloating of the services. Idleness has now come to be a natural incident of administrative life, where it would be true to say that if one man worked as he should, two others would have little to do. Such 'employment' is worse than unemployment. It would be better to pay a higher wage to officials who support unemployed and idle relatives and dependents at home than to run offices with idle hands doing less than a fair outturn of work but watching the clock all the afternoon.

The greatest waste is, however, in the management of large schemes and works. The care and economy that marked Indian officials' work in the old days are replaced by arrogant wastefulness and culpable carelessness that have become a regular habit. What we want is economy and integrity and more conscientious work. The Central Government departments set the tone for the State departments and the government departments set the tone in industry. The essential part of the national Plan for the years before us lies in this task of economy and improvement of administrative morale. Otherwise the cost of everything achieved will be more than the value of the thing achieved, and cost means taxes and yet higher inflation.

But of pre-eminent importance is what has been already stated, a bold repudiation of the policy of competing in military investments with American-aided Pakistan. A great reliance should be placed on the strength issuing out of a contented people whose welfare has been looked after than on the security that such military expenditure is imagined to give.

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National Character

National character is the keystone on which rests the fate and future of our public affairs, not this or that "ism".

National character, again, depends on and in fact is individual rectitude. Movements for the encouragement of personal rectitude, for purifying individual character, are therefore not irrelevant in the context of politics but are vitally connected with our hopes in respect of national affairs.

Individual honesty must be brought into being before we can hope for improvement of our national affairs. It is the drops that make the rain. It is no use saying 'I shall be good after I make enough for myself'. If each one continues to be dishonest, to better his affairs by wrongful means, the national character will not revive. It will continue to be in disarray as it is now. It is the totality of the character of each individual that makes what we call national character.

National character is the keystone of national affairs. It locks all the bricks together like the keystone in the arch. If the keystone is not there, the arch goes to pieces and tumbles down. It is the improvement of individual character that goes to make up the uplift of national character, which in turn becomes the keystone of the arch of national prosperity.

Every movement therefore that seeks and works to improve the character of the men and women of our country is of great importance and is intimately connected with our politics, our economy and our defence.

Gandhiji, it has been often stated, wished to spiritualize politics. He firmly held the view that we cannot keep politics and morality apart. Indeed he wanted politics to be re-built based on a true and reliable foundation, viz., individual honesty.

If the parched field of Indian politics and administration has to get fresh green life and grow, we need the monsoon of purity in national character. And the monsoon consists of little drops falling and uniting to make the rain. Individual purity of character alone can revive the parched field.

When will the people of India wake up, wake up to the need to work hard, to the need to be honest in all matters and in all walks of life including manufacture and trade? Character, which includes efficient work and truthfulness and purity of mind, is the keystone of the arch both in individual life and in national life. Politics, economics, administration, education, health and hygiene and a score of other things, all call for good character in the individual. Individuals make or mar the nation. We were once men and women of good character. Something has happened to us. It is possible to probe and say what it is that has ruined our character, but it is waste of time. Let us regain our good character quickly and all will be well—politics, administration and economic condition. There is no doubt about it. Whether we are Christians or Hindus or Muslims or Parsis or any other, and talking of Hindus in particular to whatever denomination we may belong, the problem of being good and to love to work hard, is the same.

When one looks at things all around as they are and how they are shaping, one feels pessimistic. But this pessimism must be overcome. One's duty is to be optimistic. And if God showers His Grace on us the optimism will be justified and bear fruit. Hard work, both *bodily* and brain work, and honesty will make the keystone of the arch which will

cover politics, economics, administration and everything else.

In the beginning of this change, from bad to good, from laziness to hard work, there will be a sense of personal sacrifice and a feeling of walking up a steep uphill road. But soon a new sense of pleasure will be aroused within us, which will make things not only easy but sweet, and most satisfying. All the saints of our religions, holy men of all sorts, tried to realize this from time to time. But now and just when the work is most hard, we are very short of saints and men of spiritual power whom we so much need.

The great Sankaracharya told men that they were all manifestations of the Supreme Being and that there was only a screen of illusion between us and God. It was a great and powerful doctrine which, if it informed men and women, must make them unselfish and strong. But the doctrine became more scholastic than a way of thought and life. It became scholastic *advaita* and lost its vital power. The day-to-day *advaita* shaped for action is contained in two *mantras* of the *Isa Upanishad:*

> He who practises seeing all other beings as if they lived and felt within his own body, and himself as if living and feeling in the bodies of other beings, overcomes all illwill and aversion. When, by practising thus, a man finds all beings become himself, all illusions and griefs disappear. If we thus attain the unity of oneself with all other souls, all grief automatically disappears.

Then came other holy teachers who pointed to men the way of *Bhakti,* not only in this country but in so many other countries, who are known as Hebrew and Christian and Muslim. They all taught that men are brothers and God the Father is thirsting for the true love and loyalty of His sons. They told men that God resides in men's hearts whispering love and honesty. They called this voice by many names. Conscience they called it in English, *Manas-*

saakshi, the witness of the mind, in Tamil and Kannada and other languages. They wanted men to listen to that voice and surrender themselves to it. They taught the true way of work.

The *Gita* puts the teaching in God's own mouth:

> "Work with your mind wholly dedicating the work to Me, looking on the fruits thereof not as yours, but Mine. Fill your mind with Me when you do your work. You will cross over all hurdles and difficulties through My Grace."

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